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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PTER CO

SUBJECT: COLOMBIA OFFICE OF UNHCHR RELEASES HELPFUL
STATEMENT ON SAN JOSE DE APARTADO CASE

REF: A. BOGOTA 2674

- 1B. BOGOTA 2619
- 1C. BOGOTA 2348
- 1D. BOGOTA 2156
- 1E. BOGOTA 1999
- 1F. BOGOTA 1918

1. (U) On March 22, 2005, the Colombia office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) issued a constructive statement on its website regarding the February 21 massacre of eight civilians in the Uraba region of Antioquia Department, including three members of the peace community of San Jose de Apartado.

Text of Statement

2. (U) Begin text:

"The Colombia office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in accordance with its mandate, makes the following considerations in regard to the tragic events suffered recently by the peace community of San Jose de Apartado.

For over almost a decade, grave and serious crimes have been committed against the members of the peace community of San Jose de Apartado. The majority of these crimes have still not been solved. It is necessary for the government and the appropriate authorities to take adequate measures to end this impunity.

The integral presence of state authorities in Colombian territory is necessary to guarantee and protect the fundamental rights of all those who live in the country.

The investigation of the crimes committed in the area of the peace community of San Jose de Apartado correspond, in accordance with the rule of law, to the Prosecutor General's Office ("Fiscalia").

The Office trusts that the Prosecutor General of the Nation, with the support of the Inspector General of the Nation ("Procurador") and the Human Rights Ombudsman ("Defensor del Pueblo"), will be able to find out what happened in the tragic deaths of eight civilians, among them four children, which occurred on February 21.

The Office also trusts that the members of the peace community of San Jose de Apartado will collaborate with the judicial authorities in charge of the process, and that these authorities will guarantee the security and tranquillity of the witnesses and victims, family members.

Until there is a judicial decision that declares who is responsible for these crimes, it is advisable to abstain from making statements that put in danger the lives and physical integrity of the members of the peace community or that provoke forced displacement. The Office suggests that prudence be used in handling public information related to the peace community of San Jose de Apartado.

It is the responsibility of the Colombian state to implement all the necessary measures to protect, individually and collectively, the members of the peace community of San Jose de Apartado, in accordance with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of Colombia. The Office trusts that the lives and the integrity of the members of this community will be protected and guaranteed through state measures that are adequate, respectful, and agreed to with the community."

End text.

Comment

3. (U) The statement released by UNHCHR is balanced and helpful, particularly in its call for peace community members to cooperate with judicial authorities. The Deputy Director of UNHCHR Colombia participated in the international delegation trip to the peace community on April 6 (septel).

